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LETTER DATED 13 APRIL 1994 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Any cease-fire proposal which permits the Serbian forces to hold on to territory seized during their latest offensive against Gorazde, and remain uncompliant with Security Council resolutions 824 (1993) and 836 (1993), much less maintain firing positions from within the "safe area", is unacceptable to the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. To allow the Serbian forces to maintain their occupation of any portion of this United Nations-declared and defined safe area would:

1. Subject the civilian population of Gorazde to the continuing stranglehold of and threat of murder by the Serbian forces;

2. Not provide for fair talks since the Bosnians would be negotiating with a gun to their head;

3. Effectively sanction Serbian invasion of a United Nations-protected territory;

4. Constitute a direct contravention of the will of the international community.

There can be no valid cease-fire, and no valid negotiations, until Serbian forces vacate the safe area, pulling back "to a distance wherefrom they cease to constitute a menace to their [its] security and that of their inhabitants" (Council resolution 824 (1993), para. 4 (a)). We must also reiterate that resolutions 824 (1993) and 836 (1993) explicitly allow the defence forces of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina to maintain their forces and weapons within the safe areas.

With respect to the recent allegations of abuse of the Gorazde safe area by government forces, I enclose a statement from our Presidency rejecting such allegations. Furthermore, we remind the Council that such reports have been proved flawed in the recent past. Our Government stresses its commitment to negotiations conducted in a peaceful environment, and based on the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as reaffirmed in all relevant resolutions of the Council.

May I ask for your kind assistance in circulating this letter and the annexed statement as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Muhamed SACIRBEY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Statement issued on 12 April 1994 by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The statement made by General Rose this morning has led to reasonable confusion amongst our citizens. According to that statement, critically intoned, the Bosnian Army shelled Serbian aggressor forces near Gorazde. We have sufficient reason to doubt the reliability of the source of information of General Rose. Besides, General Rose has not explained whether our forces have, with this action, answered to an attack, either in self-defence or in order to protect civilians they are obliged to protect.

It is obvious that the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) has not taken appropriate measures to prevent the advancement of Karadzic's forces towards Gorazde and efficiently protect the lives of innocent people.

More than 20 days ago, we informed the international community of the menacing concentration of aggressor forces near Gorazde. However, our reports were disregarded. Unfortunately, our reports and the danger that they forecast came true, as the safe area of Gorazde was soon afterwards attacked with the enormous fire power of Karadzic's Serb forces. Every day we reported on heavy shelling of the town and the advancement of the aggressor through the safe area. UNPROFOR persistently denied our reports. Finally, when the situation became extremely dire, the UNPROFOR Command decided to carry out air strikes of limited intensity against the aggressor forces. However, it appears that the utmost selectivity and restriction of those strikes have only encouraged the aggressors. The invasion of Gorazde has been continued. Only yesterday, at least 23 civilians were killed because of the aggressor's shelling, and many more were injured.

We are ready to cease fire not only at Gorazde but also in the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the condition that it is accompanied by the withdrawal of Serbian occupying forces from the safe area of Gorazde without prejudging a final political solution. In any case, we cannot accept the freezing of the present state, which will make the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina permanent.

Owing to great discrepancies between the information of UNPROFOR officials and our reports, i.e., reports of foreign doctors and other people in Gorazde, we consider it to be necessary that General Rose and a team of reporters go to Gorazde in order to eliminate confusion when such obvious matters are in question.

We are ready to accompany General Rose on this trip.

We also consider that UNPROFOR, in the name of humanity and in accordance with United Nations resolutions, is responsible for ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid to the numerous civilians in Gorazde, because all stocks of food and medicine in the town have been exhausted.